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If Danilooff had met his goal, Soviets might have had a case

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CAMBRIDGE — Nicholas S. Danilooff, the US journalist released yesterday from jail in Moscow where he had been held on spy charges, wrote in a college publication that he had become a journalist by chance, and that he had really wanted to work for the CIA.

The publication was the Harvard Class of 1956 — 25th Anniversary Report. In that book, members of the class submitted updates on their lives and careers 25 years after graduation.

Danilooff wrote a five-paragraph summary of his career since his graduation from college.

He wrote of his years as a foreign and Washington correspondent for The Washington Post, and of his then recent move to US News & World Report.

It was not clear in Danilooff's report whether he was joking about wanting to join the CIA. But the general tone of his report seemed light and jocular.

He wrote: "I became a journalist by chance. I had wanted, at Harvard, to become a diplomat — or, more accurately a foreign servant.

"As luck would have it, the US Foreign Service, the CIA, USIA all found my mind lacking," he wrote. "The military service found my body lacking and unfit for service."

A spokeswoman for the CIA in Washington, Kathy Pherson, said in a telephone interview that the agency does not give out information on any of its current or former employees, and therefore could not say if any individual either had expressed interest in or had applied for a job.

Danilooff, in his report, also wrote of his running a marathon in three hours, 18 minutes, and of his year in the Nieman Fellowship program for journalists at Harvard in 1972 and 1973.

(Several current and former Nieman Fellows plan a press conference on Monday to "condemn the crude and patently trumped-up charges" against Danilooff on Monday at the foundation headquarters here, a spokesman said).

Danilooff also wrote: "I have seen many ironies over the years. For example, I am delighted to have preserved some intellectual independence by becoming a journalist rather than becoming a diplomatic servant to other men."

On foreign affairs, he wrote: "I prefer to avoid comment here on the state of the world, other than to say that in Soviet-American relations, as in the Middle East, I am appalled by the number of missed opportunities."

He concluded his brief report with: "Since I do not expect to attend the Twenty-Fifth Reunion, I send good wishes to all."